

Teaching of Reading to School Beginners

***A study on the reading programmes in primary one in
Uganda***

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Abstract

The study examines reading programmes with the reference to the teaching/learning of reading to school beginners. The teaching of reading at the early stages is important because it is the quality of the experiences that children get that affect or lay the foundation for reading development (Chall, 1996). Therefore, the phenomenon, “teaching of reading to school beginners” studied is of great importance. The theoretical background used includes reading and its importance, Language of instruction, approaches to teaching reading and reading environments. Chomsky’s theory of language acquisition, Vygotsky’s and Situated learning theories were discussed in relation to reading. The semi-structured interviews were used as the main method of collecting data from the five reading teachers selected from four primary schools. Observation guides were also administered mainly to gather information from the eighty children who were observed and to validate the interview information.

From the findings, the teachers’ used two languages (Mother Tongue and English) in teaching reading to school beginners. They used methods which do not help beginning readers to develop the reading skills properly. The teaching/learning environments not up-to-date, and the content, instructional materials used do not depict the level of learners.

However, the study emphasizes that teachers’ revisit their methods, improvise and produce suitable materials, try to adapt the content and use more of the verbal communication than the written texts so as to improve the quality of reading in school beginners. It is hoped that the study has uncovered quite a number of ideas that teachers’ experience in teaching reading to beginning readers. If teachers’, other educators and parents are made aware of these issues, they may assist each other in promoting the quality of reading programmes for school beginners. Finally, a summary of findings and some recommendations are given in chapter six.

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in this study.

AAP: American Association of Paediatrics

NCDC: National Curriculum Development Centre

LOI: Language of Instruction

UPE: Universal Primary Education

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgement.....	iii
Acronyms and abbreviations used in this study.....	iv
List of tables.....	viii
1. Introduction to the Study.	1
1.1 Background to the Problem	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem	2
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study	4
1.5 Pre-conceived	5
1.6 Defination and Clarification of Concepts	5
1.7 Structure of the Thesis	6
2. Teaching of Reading to School Beginners.	7
2.1 Theoretical Frame Work	7
2.2 Theories considered in the Teaching of Reading and Reading Programmes	7
2.3 Reading and its Importance	10
2.4 Language of Instruction	14
2.5 Approaches/Methods of Teaching Reading	15

2.6	Reading Environment	19
3.	Methodology	23
3.1	Research Approach Strategy and Design.....	23
3.2	Case Bands	24
3.3	Research Location	24
3.4	Target Populations	25
3.5	Research Instruments	26
3.6	Pilot Study	28
3.7	Data Analysis Procedure.....	29
3.8	Ethical Considerations	33
3.9	Time Frame work.....	34
4.	Data Presentation and Analysis	35
4.1	Development of themes, Categories and Sub-Categories	35
4.2	Case Band Presentation and Analysis	37
4.3	Observations	44
5.	Discussion of findings	51
5.1	Language of Instruction.....	51
5.2	Methodology.....	55
5.3	Learning environments	58
5.4	Teachers' suggestions.....	60

6. Summary, Conclusion and Suggestions for Improvement	63
6.1 Conclusion	64
6.2 Suggestions for Improvements/Recommendations	66
References:	71
Appendices	75
Appendix 1: Stages of Reading Development	75
APPENDIX 2 : Interview Guide for Teachers	76
Appendix 3: Observation Guide	79
Appendix 4: Letter of Introduction for Head teachers	84
Appendix 5: Letter of introduction from University of Oslo.....	85
Appendix 6: Letter of introduction from the Ministry of Education.	86
Appendix 7: Letter of Confirmation from Ntungamo District Administration.	87
Appendix 8: Map of Uganda showing the study areas.	88
Appendix 9: Time Frame Work	89

List of tables

Table 1: Summary of respondents

Table 2: Summary of themes, categories and sub-categories

1. Introduction to the Study.

1.1 Background to the Problem

The matter of reading is of great social significance because it pertains to the issues of Literacy. From a learning perspective, reading is connected to different cognitive processes. Learning to read and write can create dramatic differences in the lives of children and will later expose them to the accumulated understanding of humankind. The initial stage, readiness encompasses the skills that young children usually obtain before they can profit from formal reading instruction but can benefit also from exposure or discovery experiences. The importance of reading in many developing societies should not be overlooked instead be emphasized. This therefore calls for regular classroom teachers, school administration, parents or care-givers and above all the curriculum developers to revisit their programmes and embrace all the necessary aspects so as to meet the needs of beginning readers in schools.

It is really valuable to develop all the required crucial skills that can prepare school beginners before the process of actual reading is introduced (That is what is called building a foundation for reading). Parents through their daily experiences with children can help them develop high-quality communication skills through correct use of language since language has been observed as a key to support reading development. The curriculum content, methods, time stipulated to teach reading, should be made meaningful, teachers should adapt their teaching through the modification of the instructional materials, teaching methods, and environments by making them more motivating and meaningful too. In addition to the above, more emphasis should be put on enhancing the language of instruction in which children should learn to read and write. For this case, the issue of teaching reading in a local language/ mother tongue, before children extend their reading and writing to the official language English should be emphasized. If all this can be looked upon, the reading programmes can be improved thus enabling beginning readers to benefit from them.

Reading as described by different writers as a source of communication may be referred to as an interaction between the author and the reader (Lyster, 1999). Furthermore, Urquhart and Alderson in Parry (2000) puts reading in two basic elements of a reader and text. They argue that the interaction between the two is a normally silent mental activity in which individuals draw on their own perception as they negotiate the material before them. While Williams and Nuttal also cited in Parry (2000), characterize reading as a process of obtaining meaning from written text.

I think that, one can not fully understand how to learn to read without some understanding of the fundamentals of how to acquire and use language. Furthermore, considering the issue of multi-languages in Uganda, it has been found out that many children fail to master reading skills because of the confusion brought by languages. For example, before a child masters his or her mother tongue, in especially urban and Sub-urban areas; such a child is introduced to the school system where the language of instruction is English a foreign language in this context. Children in such circumstances are most likely to be retarded in their reading development as a result of language confusion.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Reading is a fundamental skill as regards to the development of academic or cognitive areas of young children. It is unfortunate that in Uganda reading is not fully recognized as a serious issue in as far as education is concerned. In the first instance, full reading as subject is permitted less time for teaching (30 minutes) daily. The rest of reading skills conceivably are developed during the teaching of other subjects like; English and others, this does not however enable children enough time to grasp all the required reading skills for better reading development.

Reading problems in Uganda generally originate from many sources; in the first place, the language used in teaching reading at the very beginning stage to some extent is not favorable. That is reading is taught in the language children do not understand properly. The methods used in teaching reading are not good enough

since teachers use more of ‘chalk and talk’ (that is much use of blackboard). In other words, the methods used in teaching reading to beginning readers are not motivating, interesting to encourage children’s exploration/discovery and full involvement in the learning situation. Teachers tend to stick to the curriculum; they do not utilize their knowledge to adapt the content, materials and methods to suit the beginning reader’s needs. Teachers find it hard to provide adequate reading materials through the use of the local environment (improvisation) so as to enhance the reading skills. In addition, the curriculum does not provide meaningful content and materials that actually can develop reading skills at the emergent reading stage development.

Children in Uganda generally have a poor reading culture (Aringo 2001); this is contributed by the emphasis being put to the passing of examinations and not reading for enjoyment in the classroom. Also Greaney’s (1996) revealed that children in developing countries often miss opportunities to read for enjoyment. According to him, it has adversely affected the children’s reading skills rendering them severely underdeveloped. Reading having been combined or part of language instruction in schools, this has therefore created doubts if reading is given adequate time and attention. Observing the *Uganda Primary Curriculum, Volume One, 1999*, where reading teaching is indicated as English and literature reading, mother tongue and Kiswahili language, and time allocated as 30 minutes per reading lesson daily, the time stipulated is indeed very limited in as far as the inculcating of proper reading skills is concerned, more especially to school beginners who require sufficient time.

Teachers are expected to use suitable methods as they teach reading and reinforce it with constant practice by using relevant instructional materials that are simplified to the level of learners which Tronbacke (1997) described as easy-to-read materials. In addition, beginning readers would need constant use of verbal language to support their daily learning. Further more, a variety of flash cards, picture books, shapes of objects, word and rhyme games must be emphasised because playing with language apparently helps young children focus their attention on the sounds of words as well as their meaning. This therefore calls for schools to provide or create a conducive atmosphere for readers that can interest and motivate them to learn.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question was:

- What provisions are put in place to address the teaching and learning of reading in primary one?

The sub-questions were:

- Which language of instruction is used in teaching reading?
- Which instructional methods do teachers use in teaching beginning readers?
- Is the reading environment conducive enough for learning to read?
- What are teacher's suggestions as regards the teaching /learning of reading to school beginners?

1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine critically how reading skills can be developed in children during their early years of development; by employing a suitable language of instruction, proper methodology and content material when training reading. The findings of the study will therefore play a big role in:-

- Identifying proper and useful language of instruction that should be utilized when teaching reading to school beginners.
- Identifying suitable methods that can be employed by teachers when teaching reading to school beginners.
- Providing advice to curriculum developers on the content matter that is suitable in order to develop a multi-curriculum that can enhance the development of reading skills in beginning readers.

1.5 Pre-conceived

Studies have depicted some doubt on the effectiveness of:-

- The teachers' competence in the use of proper language of instruction when teaching reading to school beginners.
- The teachers' aptitude /efficiency to adapt the methods, content and teaching materials used in teaching reading to suit the needs of beginning readers.

1.6 Defination and Clarification of Concepts

Reading:

It refers to the visually understanding of printed words. "In a broader sense it may mean understanding of pictures, diagrams and any other graphic material" (Phoebe, 2005:6). Reading would further refer to any activity characterized by the translation of symbols, or letters in to words and sentence that have meaning to the individual (Microsoft Encarta, 2007).

Literacy:

Literacy can be defined on a number of levels. It is obviously concerned with the ability to read and write but a fuller definition might be the capacity to recognize, reproduce and manipulate the conventions of text shared by a given community. (Hertrich, 2007)

Instructional Methods:

These are specific methods, activities and materials that are used by the teachers in exact learning situations.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter contains introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, purpose and significance of the study, pre-conceived ideas, and definitions and clarification of concepts.

Chapter 2: The theoretical framework, theories that support the study, reading and its importance, reading skill development, language of instruction, approaches used in teaching reading and reading environments are involved.

Chapter 3: The methods used in the collection, organization, presentation and analysis of data are described and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: The chapter is on presentation and analysis of findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusion and suggestions for improvements/recommendations.

From this chapter let us progress to chapter two which elaborates more on the theoretical framework that supports this study.

2. Teaching of Reading to School Beginners.

2.1 Theoretical Frame Work

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theories, thoughts and contributions as indicated by different researchers whose views are applicable to this study. The study further looks at ways in which the teaching of reading and the reading programs to school beginners can be improved so as to develop reading skills.

There are specific theories that are relevant to and can be of significance in explaining the selection and design in the teaching of reading to the school beginners. In this study theories which directly or indirectly influence the teaching of reading to beginning have been considered. The main significant theories include those of Chomsky, Vygotsky and Situated Learning theory; however I will also refer to other relevant authors.

2.2 Theories considered in the Teaching of Reading and Reading Programmes

Chomsky's Theory of Language Acquisition

Noam Chomsky, an American linguist working in the 1960's, claimed that we are all born with innate knowledge of the system of 'Language or Language Acquisition Device'. In this way, what ever language we need to learn and the accompanying grammar can be decoded by the child. This theory helps us to explain how children will often apply grammatical rules which they have heard, sometimes wrongly, because they have not yet learned exceptions to these rules. An example of this could be, 'I bringed my drink'.

Chomsky's theory implies that, there is little doubt that the basic structure of language and the principles that determine the form and interpretation of sentences in

any human language are in large part innate. He emphasizes that if a child is placed in an impoverished environment, innate abilities simply do not develop, mature and flourish. According to him, a stimulating environment is required to enable natural curiosity, intelligence and creativity to develop and to enable our biological capacities to unfold.

Focusing on beginning readers, this theory reminds us that children need to be exposed to rich stimulating environment that can enable them develop language which will help them to acquire all the necessary reading skills before they go to schools. Take an example of a home in which parents or caregivers spare time to converse, tell stories, and sing songs and share rhymes and riddles with their young children. This is important because children will have had exposure with oral/ verbal communication thus will have developed adequate skills that can enhance their reading development.

This teaches us that for language to develop, a lot need to be done in the child's social, physical and psychological environment. For example; involving a child in activities that enables the child to practice a lot through verbal expression.

This calls for teachers to utilize methods that encourage discovery and exploration experiences, use of verbal communication in most of their teaching than more of writing. In so doing, beginning readers will acquire important skills that will help them to develop proper reading.

Vygotsky's Theories:

Vygotsky is best known for being an educational psychologist with a sociocultural theory. This theory suggests that social interaction leads to continuous step-by-step changes in children's thought and behaviour that can vary greatly from culture to culture (Vygotsky, 1979). Basically Vygotsky's theory suggests that development depends on interaction with people and the tools that the culture provides to help form their own view of the world. There are three ways a cultural tool can be passed from one individual to another but the most important one that is associated with how children learn, is 'imitative learning' where children tries to imitate or copy from

adults. This enables us to know that children need to have exposure to environments that can allow them imitation for further development. It is therefore, important for teachers to provide adequate exposure through time spent, methodology and instructional materials used in teaching reading during the emergent stages of reading development.

According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development a child can, through the help of an adult or more capable child, perform at a higher level than he or she can independently. The process of learning to read should thus be supported by caring and supportive individuals (in this context are teachers). The theory enables teachers to know what children are able to achieve through the use of a mediator and thus they should utilize suitable methods for example; discovery, child-centred, and all those that can involve a child in the learning situation. Further more, teachers need to use variety of instructional materials that can enable children develop important reading skills as supportive and useful mediator.

More to the above, Vygotsky further elaborates on the importance of play in children's learning situations. Following this perspective, teachers need to provide children, especially young children, many opportunities to play. Through play and imagination a child's conceptual abilities are stretched. Vygotsky argued that play leads to development. Therefore, teachers should use of play as a method of teaching reading. Through play children can develop the fundamentals required for proper development of reading skills.

The Theory of Situated Learning

Basing on the principle of situated learning in (Lave & Wenger, 1991), learning requires social interaction and collaboration, and relating it with Chomsky and Vygotsky's theories which emphasizes the interaction with the environment in the child's language development; I therefore confirm that learning basically is based on either social or physical interaction especially during the first years of children's development.

Lave & Wenger, (1991) the associates of situated learning, argued that learning normally occurs in a function of the actions, context and culture in which it occurs (which he says is situated); and he emphasized that social interaction is a critical component of situated learning in which learners become involved in a community of practice which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired.

Applying this in the field of reading, it would enable teachers to understand that it is very important to use methods that are interactive in nature so as to advance collaborative social interaction within learners especially in the struggle to improve and develop reading skills.

The theory further brings it in the focus of schools that should apply situated learning theory and a general theory of knowledge acquisition, since it can enable schools to teach activities that are more focused to problem-solving skills. It could further enables us to know that advancement or developing reading skills in our communities could be one way of equipping our children with problem-solving skills since development of reading skills is a key to success in all educational areas.

The above theories if related properly to the study, they can reveal some positive responses and they are adequate to supplement the study. This therefore brings us to the next and important part of this study which needs to be elaborated briefly before I proceed to other parts and this is reading and its importance in relation to this study.

2.3 Reading and its Importance

There are many reasons why we read. It is through reading that we can access important information individuals need, understand instructions given, it acts as a source of entertainment, or to attain new skills. In class settings reading is still a major tool used in teaching and learning.

Reading to your child from infancy on has an influencing affect on all the variables of development whether the evidence of it is directly visible or not.

According to the AAP (American Association of Paediatrics'), reading is a significant

aid in brain development and encourages a solidifying, emotional bond between parent and child. The AAP recommends initiating a daily routine of reading for infants as well as older children. However, their records reveal that Reading provides opportunities for physical development as well. Simply turning the pages of a book aids in fine tuning motor skills. It stimulates the muscles of the eyes and affects chemistry of the body, too by utilizing the brain. It also has an effect on senses such as sight, sound, touch and smell. Reading is instrumental in forming a foundation on which to build a child's educational career on whether the child in question is too young to comprehend the words on a page or not, makes no difference. (Microsoft Encarta 2007).

Throughout our daily activities, there is a lot in which reading is evidenced and we find that directly or indirectly, we encounter some form of writing and reading in our day-to-day activities. Recognizing the importance of reading in our lives, it is of great significant that practice is encouraged in all its forms. Learning to read is especially important in the classroom as up to 90% of academic work involves reading and writing (McNamara & Moreton, 1995; in Kasabavu, 2005). In learning to read, children must first pass through certain developmental stages that enable them to read as required (for more details refer to appendix 1.).

However, in the course of teaching reading, it is not only the stages that should be dealt with but also it is necessary to understand several essential ways in which the reading process can be initiated and developed. As indicated earlier in the first chapter, the area of reading is faced with many difficulties in Uganda, this chapter will therefore base its concern on how the teaching of reading to school beginners is done and look at possible areas that need to be improved so as to enable young children attain all the required reading skills that can allow them excel in reading programs.

This chapter will be tackled basing on sub- titles as; reading skills development, teaching methods or approaches, the language of instruction and reading environments

Reading Skills Development

Reading skills develop in sequences and educators need to help children progress along those sequences. Reading skills needs to be mastered systematically from one stage to another and they begin to develop during first months and years of life (Chall, 1996). Children's experiences with speech and literacy can begin to form a basis for their future reading success. The ideal time to begin sharing books with children is during babyhood. Many researchers consistently demonstrate that the more children know about language and literacy before they arrive at school, the better equipped they are to succeed in reading. To enable appropriate support in reading programs, it is important that parents and teachers of young children must understand the normal pattern of reading development. Acquisition of literacy skills is integrated across different developmental areas which are cognitive, emotional, social and instructional factors (Leslie & Allen, 1991; Shanahan, 1997; Chall, 1996 & McSchane, 1990). Central to all these factors is what makes it possible for children to develop strategies to promote vocabulary, other language skills and basic knowledge about the world. The love for books, enthusiastic about reading as children begin to explore being readers and writers. Through modelling and scaffolding by teachers and parents, children learn to recognize words automatically.

Oral Language and Phonological Awareness Skills

A child's understanding that spoken words are made of individual sounds is an important foundational skill for literacy and should develop in early childhood. Language is an intellectual process which in the pre-school years becomes integrated with other intellectual areas so that the whole process of thinking becomes extended and enhanced (Cooper, Moodley & Reynell, 1999).

For a child to master that the word "ball" is made of the three sounds /b/a/l/ is an example of phonetic awareness. According to Burns. P.G & Snow. C.E (1999), phonetic awareness is more likely to develop in those who have varied language experiences including word play activities such as rhyming and singing activities. Phonological awareness is one linguistic form that is necessary for children in

developing reading abilities. This implies that phonological processing is the use of information about the sound structure of language in interpreting written input (Niyisabwa, 2005). A child should however learn to recognise differentiate and use phonological input to interpret and process the information required.

Print Awareness Skill

Print Awareness is the initial stage of real reading, where the main skill is decoding which is the process of recognizing letters hence words McSchane, (1990); Dockrel & McSchane, (1993). This is the stage of cracking the code and reading may not make sense, instead readers are more concerned with what letters are and how they correspond to sounds in their language. Print awareness is also an important skill which children need to develop during the pre-school years. Print awareness is simply the idea that spoken words are represented by written symbols. Understanding the alphabet in primary one is a more specific but essential skill in learning to read. Letter knowledge is an important predictor of reading, but the ability to recognize word onsets also seems to be very important predictor of reading development.

Lyster (1999) explains that children develop an important awareness of the correspondences between the spoken and written language by listening the sounds compiling a word, starting with the first sounds in words and being exposed to the letters as well as the words they are part of. Burns et al, (1999) acknowledge that it is a mapping of individual sounds to print that brings about the decoding of words. This means that, children who have not had the opportunity of shared reading activities or exposure to many kinds of print materials may find it hard to understand that the funny- looking black symbols on paper are actually letters, words and sentences that are said when they are read out loud. These children will be at a higher risk of becoming poor readers or experiencing reading difficulties when the actual process of reading is introduced. Young children should therefore be encouraged to “write” and “draw” pictures to present a thought, which may include some letters as children begin to learn letter/ sound relationships. Once children develop these important skills, they will be in position to read appropriately.

2.4 Language of Instruction

Uganda's policies consider English the official language since independence in 1962 because it was already rooted in administration, media and education. Uganda's ethno-linguistic diversity also has made it impossible to choose another language as an official language. Basing on the main stream of the education systems, reading is considered as an aspect of language planned in the Primary Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 1990 and 1999). The planners reasoned that reading is part of language because language skills develop from listening, speaking, reading and writing. The language policy as per the NCDC, 1990 and 1999, states that, children at primary level learn two languages the mother tongue and English. The mother tongue is to be taught and used for instruction from primary one to four, while English is just taught as a subject (Uganda Government, 1992:19). But this could not be effective in urban areas where people speak different languages. So the urban policy changed and English was selected to be language of instruction for all subjects.

The White Paper further elaborates that, in urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle and that the relevant area language will also be taught as a subject in primary school. The dilemma would be if this policy is taken as it stands, children who do not use English at home will be highly disadvantaged because their determination to learn will be frustrated by the lack of reinforcement in homes where some adults feel that using the mother tongue is a major means of asserting their identity (Parry, 2000).

To speak the truth the language of instruction in Uganda has always caused controversial issues to the extent that no clear format has been put in place on which is to be an official language and which is a national language. The language policy in Ugandan schools is very confusing and children find it difficult to connect the important issues in different languages used in both homes and schools in relation to reading thus becoming failures in reading.

Obanya (1980) in Brock-Utne (1999) confirms that the African child's major problem is linguistics. He argued that instruction is given in a language that is not normally

used in his immediate environment. In support to the above statement, Metrotra also cited in Brock-Utne (1999), puts his emphasis on reading by saying that students who first of all learn to read in their mother tongue may later on learn to read in a second language more quickly than those who are first taught to read in the second language from the beginning of their schooling. Unlike Tanzania which has achieved a significant degree of national integration through the use of Kiswahili, Uganda's national integration has been divided by the absence of such a widely understood national language (Nsibambi, 1991).

Furthermore, one would not be wrong to say that, in any attempt to use a foreign language as a medium of instruction, at least in the early grades of the primary school, children are bound to have a detrimental effect on their mental development. This can be observed in the child's need to express himself as he is always interfered with the foreign language since it will be hard to verbalize a foreign language properly. In any case, such a language may provide limited "phrases" in which the child can express himself clearly. In a nutshell therefore, for children to master the important skills in reading and writing, they should first be familiar or fluent in mother tongue which affirms the foundation in the acquisition of a second language.

2.5 Approaches/Methods of Teaching Reading

There are a variety of approaches that can be employed in the teaching of reading. It is mainly during the first grade that most children define themselves as good or poor readers. Teachers are therefore expected to adapt suitable methodological strategies to suit each child's needs so as to develop reading skills right from the beginning. To get reading right in the early grades, Torgesen (2004) suggests that schools should first design a balanced reading program that includes; phonemic awareness, word-building skills and reading comprehension. In addition to this, other researchers view that since early development in reading and spelling depends on phonological awareness, an area that has proved to enhance instruction, therefore training in phonological awareness would be the first requirement in developing decoding and

spelling skills (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Adams, 1990; Kamhi & Catts, 1991; Lyster, 1995).

I actually believe that for children to begin reading, they must know how to blend isolated sounds into words, and how to break words into their component sounds. Beginning readers who seem not to know letters and sounds should be given special catch-up instruction. In addition to such phonemic awareness beginning readers must know the sound of letters and have a basic understanding of that letters of words go from left to right and represent sounds.

Torgesen (2004), points out that 'Phonic Instruction' is the best approach in teaching reading to beginners. Phonic instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling. The primary focus of phonics instruction is to help beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns and to help children learn how to apply this knowledge in their reading. Phonic instruction may be provided systematically or incidentally.

Whole Language Approach

Emphasis of this approach is on teaching through well- designed language. This means that learning is a natural part of normal language development and that children should learn to read in ways very similar to the ways in which they learn to listen and talk. In this approach children should be actively engaged in acquiring about the meaning of print and gradually come to use print just as they do spoken language. Smith (1977) in Hallanhan (1996) one of the champions of whole language instruction suggests that children must realize that print is meaningful as a pre-linguistic method in reading instruction.

This approach encourages teachers to have children write frequently and thus learn to write coherent sentences, paragraphs, and passages simply by reading. The children read words and sentences in wholes not as letter sounds which are emphasizing on the gestalt of reading. Advocates of this approach sometimes refer to it as the top-down

process as it focuses on the readers whom they say do not begin reading with their minds totally blank, but bring information based on past experience with language and their world to the act of reading. Fluent readers bring more information to the written text than the text itself provides. Because of this, readers do not give close attention to the word and parts, but use the past experience to predict meaning as they read.

Shared Reading

According to Smith & Elley, shared reading is believed to be a New Zealand method developed by Holdaway (1980). In this method, a teacher introduces a book to a class or group of children reads a text to and later, with them, and concludes with some sort of activity based on the story read. The teachers main focus is put on in short instructional detours', to new words, rhymes, punctuation marks, sounds and blends all in the context of the story (Smith & Elley, 1998:33).

I believe that shared reading could be one of the best approaches of teaching reading because it creates a close relationship between a child and the teacher where by the child gains a lot of support, encouragement from the teacher. Through teacher- child reading a book together, a child acquires knowledge through many ways; such as book and print awareness, functions of print and listening comprehension as he or she copies or imitates the teacher. In vygotskian style, the teacher provides the 'scaffolding' at the onset, but gradually withdraws as children become familiar with the language of the book. A lot of incidental learning goes on during the process of sharing the book between the teacher and children, new vocabulary, letter sound relations prediction skills and new sentence structures (Smith & Elley, 1998)

Guided Silent Reading

"Guide silent reading is one of the main teaching techniques used at all levels of school from new entrants through to form two classes. The basis of guided reading is a teacher and a child or group of children reading a story together silently with periodic discussion" (Smith & Elley, 1998:37). The text is introduced to the reader who is then 'guided' through it during the reading session. Guiding can consist

asking a series of questions and getting the children to answer by reading silently through or referring to the text and reading sections aloud, and then discussing their answers with the group. It can also take place between the children and the teacher. Guided silent reading could benefit children who do not concentrate on reading texts when alone. Through this, their attention is focused on what is to be read and as they ask questions about which has been read, they come to comprehend the text.

Reading Aloud to Children

In this approach teachers take time to read to children the text while they are listening. Holdaway (1980) in Smith & Elley, 1998:39, outlines benefits of being read to as: “Children are more likely to develop a love of good books and good literature if the reading is done well”. Children gain practice in visualizing events and objects which are removed in time and place. This ‘decontextualising’ ability to think about things out of their context is an important element in much school work. Children expand their vocabulary and understanding of good sentence structure.

I agree that this is another good method especially in teaching reading to beginning readers. That is as the teacher reads a ‘word’ or ‘sentence’, children listen attentively. As a result they capture the sounds of words and eventually they gain sufficient vocabulary. Children further gain a lot in comprehension and re-telling ability and understanding of stories teachers read.

All in all, the above approaches if employed by teachers can provide a solid foundation on which skills like decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension could be instilled in children and thus becoming excellent readers. This leads us to another important part of this study which is the reading environment that supports reading development.

2.6 Reading Environment

According to Lerner, (1993), learning competencies depend on positive interactions with the various environments: these include school environment and home environment.

School Environment

These are areas a child is accessed to in preparation to learn reading. To prepare children for reading instruction in the early grades, it is best that they are exposed to high quality language and literacy environments in their homes, day care centre and preschools (Burns et al, 1999). Beginning readers need to be exposed to conducive and motivating reading environments that is; environments that can prompt the child through play, talking, singing, rhyming and conversations. The classroom climate established by the teacher can have a major impact on pupil's motivation and attitudes towards learning. The type of classroom climate generally considered to best facilitate pupils learning is one that is purposeful, task oriented, relaxed, warm and supportive and has a sense of order (Kyriacou, 1998).

Today researchers have gone beyond what is called specific readiness skills like fine motor skills and the ability to tell right from left as identification for a child being ready to read. Burns (1999) shows that growing up to be a reader depends mostly on the child's knowledge of language and print. They further maintain that a wide range of experiences with printed and spoken languages, from infancy through early childhood, strongly influence a child's future success in reading.

Kyriacou further revealed that, "the classroom must feature accessible print that support children's daily reading and writing whereby each classroom has a sizeable library of children's books, with featured authors and books available in groupings. In addition to the above, each classroom uses charts, poems, lists and big books for instruction and their wall include displays of children's work" (p.9). Such a literate environment functions as a support system for children by providing resources and prompts that celebrate and encourage literate behaviors. School and classroom

environments must contain signs or labels that could be read aloud to children thus improving their reading skills such as library, head teachers office, bathrooms, kitchen and others. In other words the general physical environment of the school contributes highly to the success or failure of learners in their reading performance.

Home Environments

Basing on Chall et al (1990), the home can provide a strong literacy environment if parents provide literacy experiences for their children by reading to them, buying books, teaching them to read, and expressing high educational expectations for them. Homes may also enhance or hamper children's ability to function at school, depending upon the degree of stress or supportiveness in the home.

Chall and her associates emphasized greatly the importance of contact between family and school. Parent-school collaboration related positively to the children's reading, writing and vocabulary development. According to Samuels (1986) the types of family behaviours related to intellectual developments and schools include parental demands to language development in the form of providing good language models, enlarging the child's vocabulary and emphasizing correctness of usage; and parental provision for learning in the home and beyond in the form of providing a place for the child to read and do homework, establishing set times for home works providing books and magazines, taking the child to museums and libraries and establishing a model the parent and one who reads and respects scholarship.

Jeffree & Skeffington,(1980), in their study found out that, children who seem to have very little difficulty in school have usually had a great deal of help from their parents before they began school. It meant that parents have played with their children a lot and without knowing it have laid the foundation for reading and writing. They further elaborated that reading picture books, bed time stories, every night playing with alphabet bricks by parents with children, helps them to develop their vocabulary. In support to this, am convinced that even those funny rhymes and riddles, songs recited by parents and grand parents to children from babyhood, could

also provide excellent practice in listening to sounds which skills later help them to learn to read.

More to the above, parents encouragement through appreciation, motivation of any kind like; buying simple gifts, reading charts, letter books and even saying thank you to a child after every struggle as they practice reading is very important to developing children's reading skills.

The main focal point of this chapter was to convey some of the theoretical and empirical occurrences in real life from other countries and settings concerning reading programs. Reading and its importance, reading skills development were viewed first in relation to reading programmes. The Language of Instruction mainly in reference to the development of reading skills in children, approaches or methods teachers use in teaching reading to school beginners and reading environments towards the promotion of reading skills has also been highlighted.

This information will be of particular importance to me in discussing my findings in chapter 5, as I will be reflecting on them. This therefore leads us to the next chapter the methodology chapter.

3. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology. It presents thoroughly how this study was carried out. That is the choice and reasons for the selection of the research strategy used in the study, data collection procedure, target population and the sampling techniques all are covered here. This chapter further elaborates issues relating to research informants, their selection, interview guides, observation guides and administration of interviews and observations. Lastly, this chapter will bring forth the issues of research validity and reliability.

3.1 Research Approach Strategy and Design

Talbot & Edwards (1994) define research design as a plan blue print or guide for data collection and interpretation. A research design could further mean a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. The main approach of this study is qualitative because it gives opportunities to study research phenomena's in their natural settings and uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic in nature (Creswell, 2003). It further gives an attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The study utilized a case study strategy because it would like to cover contextual conditions believing that they might be highly pertinent to the phenomena of study (Yin, 2003).

Basing on the above explanation, especially qualitative approach by Creswell (2003), I chose to use it because it could be richly used hand in hand with the suggested methodological strategy (interpretative approach) to describe properly views on how reading programmes are handled in order to advance reading skill development in school beginners in Ugandan primary schools.

The study used a multiple of cases that consisted of four schools that were different in

nature, whereby the information gathered is descriptive and qualitative. In order to validate my case findings, the process of triangulation was employed. Gall, et al (2003) describes it as a process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysis or theories to support the validity of case study findings. In general I used a qualitative approach because it enables one to get rich data /information. The next section indicates the procedures used in collecting the data.

3.2 Case Bands

Justification

According to Yin, (1994) researchers are allowed to compose their own appropriate forms of organizing data for purposes of easy analysis interpretation and discussion, since case studies do not follow any stereotypical form. I decided to adapt a “Case-Band” approach in order to aid me systematize and analyze my data in a more logical manner. I used Case-Band operationally to mean a collection of cases focusing on one single phenomenon.

Since I worked with diverse categories of informants though in the same field that is; teachers from different settings, I decided to categorize my cases in case-bands. Each case-band contained an urban or rural setting. And in each setting views were generated from different teachers that were from dissimilar schools. In both settings I also observed groups of children selected from the selected schools and in each class, during the reading lessons observed 40 children were observed in order to acquire more information on what was discovered in interviews with teachers. Therefore, in the data presentation I will only give comments on the general observations carried since they were less detailed. More information on this is exposed in chapter four.

3.3 Research Location

According to the purpose and objectives of this study, the place that could offer relevant information was Uganda where two regions, the central and the western,

were chosen. Four primary schools were selected, two from urban and two from the rural setting. However, this followed the link that there was likelihood to interact with the informants in the languages they both understood (English and Mother Tongue) and the convenience to the selected schools. And all the interviewees selected revealed positive results because the choice was done sensitively as it has been explained in chapter four.

3.4 Target Populations

This refers to all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which researchers wish to generalize the results of their research (Gall, et al, 2003). The target population in this study involved all reading teachers in primary schools but only reading teachers from the selected four schools were used. Children from the selected schools were used because I wanted to observe children in the actual learning situations in order to confirm with what the teachers had told me during the interview sessions concerning the methods, language and environmental issues in reading sessions.

Accessibility of Target Population

The target population was easily accessed in the schools from selected regions that is, the central (Kampala) for urban schools and western regions for rural schools. I visited the schools and interviewed the informant's face- to- face and made all the observations myself.

Sampling Procedure

Patton (1990) calls it criterion based selection which is the strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information. Since the main purpose of the study was to elicit views from teachers concerning the teaching of reading to school beginners, the effective method was 'purposeful' sampling which, as mentioned above. Gall, et al, (2003) described it as selecting samples that are likely to be information rich, so purposeful sampling

was used to select all research participants in this study. The selection recognized reading teachers of primary ones who could offer rich and valid information basing on the research theme. In order to confirm with the information gathered from teachers, I observed the some children during the teaching and learning sessions in reading environments. Initially I intended to interview four teachers but I ended up with five because I found extra teacher in one of the urban school instead of one teacher.

Table 1: Summarizes of the number of respondents by category and sex.

Setting	Category	Female	Male	Total school 1+2
School 1 + 2	Teachers	3	-	
School 3+ 4	Teachers	2	-	5
School 1 +2	Children	Yy 20	Xx 20	
School 3+ 4	children	Yy 20	Xx 20	80

3.5 Research Instruments

This study employed the use of interviews and observation guides as its chief instruments as elaborated below:

Interview Guide

Interviewing is a form of questioning characterized by the fact that it employs verbal questioning as its principal technique of data collection (Sarantokas, 1998). Creswell (1998) describes an interview guide as a normal conversation with a purpose.

Focusing on the topic, I used semi-structured interviews that contained open-ended questions whereby the questioning technique was not rigid so it permitted changes where needed. The process of gathering information was face-to-face and I chose to use a tape recorder in order to gain more information and to watch certain incidents that were significant.

Tape Recording

In the study tape recording the interview was done in addition to note taking so as not to miss important information which could not be captured properly during interview sessions. According to Gall et al (2003), tape recording interview is important because by playing back the interviewers can gain insights in to interviewees handling of questions and become aware of problems that were escaped during the interview itself. The tape recording provides a complete verbal record and it can be studied much more thoroughly than data in the form of interviewer notes. A tape recorder also speeds up the interview process because there is no need for extensive note taking. Holloway (1997) & Hycner (1999) recommend that the researcher listens repeatedly to the audio recording of each interview to become familiar with the words of the interviewee/ informant in order to develop a holistic sense, the 'gestalt'.

I used note-taking as a method of storing the gathering information which was supplemented by tape-recording. Since time was limited to note each and everything, I had asked interviewees permission to use a tape recorder during our discussions. Note taking or tape recordings are the usual methods for preserving the information collected in an interview. Gall, et al, (2003) indicate that "note-taking facilitates data analysis, the information is readily accessible and much of it might already have been classified in to appropriate response and categories by the interviewers" (p.248). They further elaborate that use of tape recorders has several advantages over note taking for example it reduces the tendency of interviewers to make and unconscious selection of data favoring their biases and it further provides a complete verbal record and it can be studied much more thoroughly than data in the form of interviewer notes.

Observation Guides

According to Maxwell (1996), observation guides are chiefly used for proper understanding the theory in use as well as aspects of the participants. In the study, observations were conducted to scrutinize teachers in teaching sessions, the learning and teaching environments and also to watch children's' behavior in reading sessions. Observations are vital because they often allow one to depict on inferences about someone's meaning and perspective that you can not get by relying solely on interview data.

Procedure for organization of the Interview and Observation Guides

The interviews were administered to five interviewees who were all reading teachers from primary one classes plus a total number of eighty children were observed during the course of teaching and learning reading in primary one classes. Before conducting any interview I had to introduce myself to the head teachers and then class reading teachers of the selected schools, as a student carrying out research. Briefly I explained my topic of study and I had to create a conducive atmosphere before hand by promising to keep all views gathered confidential. All interviews were done using both mother tongue and English languages because I wanted to make the interview sessions warm and relaxed, whereby if there was difficulty in understanding what is asked in English, it was re-asked in vernacular.

3.6 Pilot Study

Before the actual study was conducted, I prepared a pilot study to field test interview guides to guarantee at least some credibility and reliability in them. This enabled me to ensure respondents, participation and understanding of the instruments. In so doing, it would enable me to identify some of the likely challenges that would hamper or jeopardize the data collection process (Robson, 1993; Morse, 1994). The pilot study was carried in two schools, **(one urban and one rural)** whereby in each school one reading teacher was interviewed.

Challenges met in the pilot study

There were inevitable, first for the fact that the entire interview guides were formulated while I was still in Oslo. It was possible that I could have overlooked some seemingly obvious issues. Secondly, it was important to conduct a pilot study because it helped me refine my tools and the data collection plans with respect to both content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 1994:74). The major challenge was translating of interview guide which was designed in English to Mother tongue language for especially rural teachers and some questions seemed unclear. Lastly, during one session I failed to fix my tape-recorder in order and I found nothing on the tape on my arrival.

Changes made after pilot study

Having recognized such problems, I had to alter the whole procedure. In the final study I decided to make appointments for interviewing teachers out of class hours, several changes were made in questioning technique with my local advisor's assistance which made all questions easier to understood.

This therefore takes us to a different fundamental section as far as this study is concerned, and this will be the data presentation and analysis episode.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

I did the data collection during my field work sessions from September to December 2006 as it was the time designed for that. Before starting my data collection, I reported the issue to the ministry of education and sports in Kampala where I presented an introductory letter from University of Oslo. The Ministry of Education and Sports gave me a letter which was allowing me to perform research in schools, but to be more official; I had to show that letter to the district education officers of the selected districts who forwarded me to schools. Thereafter I had to contact head teachers on telephones informing them of my visit to their schools. On my arrival to schools, the head teachers introduced me to the class teachers of the primary one

classes of which was my interest and there in started collecting all the required information.

Interviews and Observations

In order to get pertinent information from teachers, face-to-face interviews were used in the study. The reasons for carrying out face-to-face interview method was to enable me attain the attention of participants so as to gain in depth information about the reading programs and the teaching of reading in primary one in the selected schools. Interviewing is an easy way to guide and inquire for clarity from the interviewee on vague or partial questions or can permit room for prompts during the interview sessions. Interviews were supported by use of tape recorder which was used hand in hand with the interview and later was listened to carefully to confirm or to give extra information that was noted during the interview stage.

Further more, observations were used in order to boost the information gathered through interviews and more especially observations were used to extract information from children by observing their social behaviors during the learning environments. This is supported by Creswell, (2003) who suggested that during observations the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the researchers' site.

Categorizing of Interview Guides

After all the interviews were done the next step was making different categories from each interview guide. I started this work with help of my fellow course mates whereby we had to assist each other in identifying the categories one by one with the assistance of our research adviser. A category according to Strauss & Corbin, (in Creswell (1998) represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances. It was after making the categories that it seemed a bit easier to begin the process of data analysis.

Validity and Reliability

To achieve a high standard quality study is to ensure accurate answers to the questions. To achieve a good study depends on the high-quality the study design would reflect its introduction. In qualitative research, validity can take two forms; external and internal validity. External validity refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalized or have relevance to the population from which the participants were drawn. Internal validity refers to the degree to which the research findings can be influenced by extraneous variables (Yin, 1994; Kvale, 1996).

Reliability refers to the degree of precision or accuracy observed through out the whole process of a study. Therefore in assessing the quality of this research work, identifying its validity and reliability were crucial issues that needed maximum stress

Securing Validity and Reliability

To ensure maximum validity and reliability in the study, after developing the instruments, had to pre test them with my fellow students in order to find out the eras. I also carried out a Pilot study which enabled me to redesign the questions in the interviews to suit properly the purpose of the study. Afterwards, face-to-face interviews were done with teachers which enabled me to get the required information. Interviews were conducted in both mother tongue and English which enabled the informants the freedom to elaborate whatever information they wanted in the language they are familiar with.

Reviewing interviews

After carrying out a pilot study I realized that some questions in the interview guide were vague, so I had a chance to redesign these questions this enabled me lastly to capture the views I was intending to get.

Observations

This was done especially during the teaching-learning situation, I was able to compare and contrast through this method what the informants had told me about classroom management strategies since I had the opportunity to generate a lot of information by actually seeing what was going on in class spontaneously.

Observation took several days in order to understand actually the participation of children in reading sessions, teaching methods used and how the reading environments were arranged and this helped me to identify what caused difficulties in children.

I prepared an interview guide that was solely prepared to collect relevant information from teachers. It had three main sections, section one was a preliminary part which was intended to bring the two in to contact through enabling the interviewee to the understanding of why he or she is being interviewed and to generate a warm impression. The second section required the background information of the interviewee concerning his age, gender and educational background. The last part focused on the major point of the study: the teaching of reading to school beginners. The questioning technique was open-ended demanding to obtain in depth information on the phenomena studied.

Document consultation

Studying of the relevant documents like class time table and curriculum were done in order to contribute to the validity of the study. This enabled me to check the time stipulated bearing in mind teachers arguments about time.

Replay of tapes

Since I recorded all the interviews held on tapes, I was in position to play back the recorded information to my informants. This was for purposes of clarity and conformity; I wanted to make sure that the informants did not have to doubt their own utterances. The informants were free to amend the information they had previously given if wanted. I asked a friend to listen to the tapes to confirm what I had written

down in case I missed some phrases. Triangulation of all the three methods of data collection assisted me in checking different information gathered through all the methods thus increased validation of the study. As Gall, et al (2003) state that the use of a variety of data collection methods helps to check the validity and reliability of the data obtained. On the other side, the use of tape recorders also played a big role in providing more information which later added on the validity and reliability of the study. I asked a friend to listen to the tape recorder and write down whatever he hears; I later cross checked with my transcriptions to confirm where messes were.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The qualities that make a successful qualitative researcher should be revealed through an exquisite sensitivity to ethical issues that are present when we engage in any moral act (Marshall & Rossman, 1995: 71-77).

Professional ethics are of paramount importance in any research. In spite of the fact that they defend the informants, they assist in bridging the gap between the researcher and informant and raise their relationship. For the case of this study, I have categorized the ethical considerations under three stages; at the planning stage, during the study and after the study.

Considerations at the Planning stage

It is of immense importance to seek for permission to any official duty. Therefore for the sake of my protection during my study I had to ask for consent from pertinent bodies before I moved out in to the field. Since my study was essentially concerned with schools, I had to get an introductory letter from the concerned bodies. This showed that I respected my bosses. I also made official requests to the class teachers to participate in the study. This was very important in that it served to uphold the dignity and respect for the informants (Ballard & McDonald, 1998). The requests to teachers were done verbally and organized by observing the class time table since my study interrupted somehow their timetable. I discussed the purposes

of my topic with teachers and guaranteed them total confidentiality on all information I got from them.

Considerations during the Study

Before the interviewing sessions began, I asked informants to let me also use a tape recorder. This enabled them liberty during the interview and cited ethnically as a sign of respect to them. Since observations were done during the teaching sessions, teachers were informed in advance of the days I was to be there such that they are not ambushed. I asked them to decide on the group of children to observe.

Considerations after the study

In our culture, saying thank you is considered more important than a token. I had to express my gratefulness towards their participation in my study and after the study I kept the relationship with the schools because I had to share a lot with head teachers even after my study concerning the area of reading since it is the issue of concern in Uganda's education today. I promised to keep all the information gathered from schools as confidentially as possible.

3.9 Time Frame work

I felt that by having an organized time frame, I would be in position to logically distribute my efforts and time in the preparation for data collection process. This was divided into two phases: while at Oslo and while in Uganda (See Appendix 9). This therefore takes us to a different fundamental section as far as this study is concerned, and this will be the data presentation and analysis episode.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate and analyze data as obtained during the study, in order to comprehend the study logically by focusing on the reading programs that can benefit beginning readers in primary schools. I felt it would create good judgment if I could analyze data according to the two case-bands (**rural and urban settings**). Each Case-Band respectively is dealt with so that a coherence of “involvement” of related cases (respondents) can be viewed and discussed in turn. This indicates that each Case-Band will be viewed by observing its function, or the connection of each of the members in the Case- Band towards the teaching of reading to school beginners. The use of Pseudo names for all respondents used in this study will be considered. Lastly, in chapter five I will bring out a comparative view of the data analyses amongst the Case-Bands such that the debate can give reasonable conclusion.

4.1 Development of themes, Categories and Sub-Categories

The development of themes, categories and sub-categories were done following the research questions and bearing in mind the views of respondents.

Table 2: summary of themes, categories and sub-categories

Theme	Category	Sub category
Background information	Gender	Male or Female
	Age	20 -30years
		30- 40years or Above- 40years
	Educational background	P.7 , Senior four or College training
	Teaching experience	5years , 10years or Above 10 years
Language	Language of instruction	Local language and English language
Methodology	Teaching methods	Demonstration, discovery, storytelling, rote method, chalk and talk, listen and say, role play, dramatization, illustration, peer grouping and look and say. Use of relevant instructional materials
	Assessment	Reading activities, Tests and Exams
Learning environments	Home	Reading materials
	School	Incidental reading materials ,Nature corner and Enough time
Teachers suggestions	Duration	Maintain, Reduce or Increase
	Teaching	Materials, Methods and Curriculum
	Policies	Increase of time, Provision of reading books & specify content

The above themes, categories and sub-categories are useful because they will enable me to categorize the smooth flow of information as identified through the research process and will assist me as I proceed to the next step five (discussion process).

4.2 Case Band Presentation and Analysis

Responses from the three respondents from urban setting (**Teacher A, B& C**) are presented first respectively, depicting on what was asked of them in the semi-structured interviews. The three teachers' are the representatives of Case- Band 1 (rural setting). They will be followed by responses from the two respondents from Case-Band 2 (rural setting) who are (**Teacher D & E**). The responses from different respondents are shown here under their different themes that originated from the research questions

Background information

Teacher A is a female teacher within the age of 45 years and above. She started teaching as a grade two teacher but later upgraded to grade three where she attained a teaching certificate. She narrated that has been teaching in primary schools but has managed to teach reading for only three years.

Teacher B is also a female within the age range of 30-40 years of age, and trained in early childhood education as her first training, later under took an in-service training course in teaching reading to school beginners. She acknowledged that has taught reading for four years.

Teacher C also female in her late years of 40's who trained as a grade three primary teacher but without any specialty in handling young children. She has taught reading to young children for fifteen years.

Teacher D female teacher in her mid thirty years of age, she trained as a general primary teacher with a grade three teaching certificate of education and has taught reading for ten years.

Responding to the same, **Teacher E** is also a female in her early years of thirties who indicated that she did general training as a grade three primary teacher to teach all children and so far taught reading for only one year.

Language

When asked about the language of instruction used in teaching reading to school beginners, respondents from the urban setting viewed like this; **Teacher A's** responses were; *"I use English language most of the time because I have different pupils that come from homes where several languages are used being an urban school, although sometimes I try to translate to Luganda being the area language where pupils are living and as being considered by the curriculum as the area language especially when teaching mother tongue or vernacular lessons"*.

Teacher B in responding to the language of instruction indicated that, "I use English language for sounds and Luganda for Mother tongue".

Responding to the language of instruction, **Teacher C** said that, she is uses English translated to Luganda.

Likewise teachers from the rural settings had their own views depending on the nature of environment in which they schools are.

Teacher D said that, "Mother tongue is taught in local language whereas English reading is taught in both languages to enable pupils understand the hard concepts", When she was asked to respond on the language of instruction used in teaching reading to school beginners.

Teacher E's responds showed that both languages English and Local language or mother tongue are used in the teaching of both reading languages.

Methodology

When **teacher A** was asked on the methods she uses in teaching reading, she answered like this; *"I use a variety of methods in teaching reading for example; story telling, demonstration, chalk and talk, illustration, dramatization, peer grouping and look and say"*. And when asked to give her opinion on the methods used in teaching reading in lower classes, she elaborated , *" through my experience I feel that the*

methods used in teaching reading to school beginners should be motivating ones that can involve full participation of pupils thus encouraging skill development”.

In trying to respond on the above, **Teacher B** viewed like this; “it becomes easy when you teach reading using the ‘Phonic method’ (sound) form instead of using letter or alphabet method”, and responding to the methods she uses when teaching, she said, “*I use methods like; look and say, phonic method, role play, rote method, story telling, demonstration, discussion and group work*”

And in response to her opinion on the methods used in teaching reading in lower classes, she responded like this ... the methods must involve learner’s participation or be more child-centred. Lastly, she said that the best methods for teaching reading to her are; look and say, phonic method and story telling.

Teacher C in her response to the above, indicated, “*I use methods like, listen and say, imitation, rote method and role play whereas my best methods are; look and say, role play and imitation*”. And on her opinion to the methods used in teaching reading in lower classes, she depicted that, the methods must involve learner’s participation.

Asked about the methods used in teaching reading in lower classes, **Teacher D** narrated that, “*I use methods like guided discovery, explanation, story telling, rote method and the best methods to me are those that motivate the teaching and learning process*”.

The response of **Teacher E** on the methods used in teaching reading were; “*I use different methods to teach reading like, look and say, demonstration, experimentation, integration, story telling, dramatization and illustrations and to me dramatization, story telling and illustrations are the best methods*”.

Teacher A when asked to describe how she assesses her learners in reading subjects, she elaborated like this; “*I assess my learners regularly through daily reading activities, monthly tests and end of term of examinations*”.

In trying to respond to the same, **Teacher B** explained like this, “*My pupils are assessed through mental work or dictation, play games, spelling exercises and tests*”.

Teacher C in her responses towards the kind of assessment she uses, pointed out, “*pupils are assessed through daily reading activities, tests and examinations*”.

Asked on how the assessment procedures they use in assessing the reading skill development, **Teacher D** said that, she assesses her pupils through class activities and tests.

Teacher E in responding to the same revealed that, she uses daily activities, tests and mental work of games (read and writes games).

Learning environments

Here findings show the views of teachers on the environments that could either promote children’s reading abilities, and those that could bring about reading difficulties. In responding to the above, teacher’s had views that were almost similar.

To begin with, **Teacher A** narrated like this; “*the environments that can benefit beginning readers are:- Those which are conducive, motivating thus encouraging the development of reading skills, for example, with variety of incidental reading materials; those with lots of play materials because through play children are learning*”.

Teacher B: she stated that “*both home and school environment must be equipped with lots of incidental reading materials information of pictures, letter books, charts, flash cards, reading trees and labels in all areas within the child’s reach and enable children time to practice reading*”

Teacher C: Responding on the environments that can promote reading skills, she elaborated that, “*both home and school environments must be well equipped with lots of reading materials, for example; the classrooms should have reading trees, nature corners lots of flash cards, charts and play corners and above all children should be exposed to reading materials and time to with the guidance of a responsible person*”.

In trying to respond to the environments that can benefit beginning readers, **Teacher D** did not give any response. **Teacher E** in response to the same, highlighted the following, *“the best environments for the development skills are; those that have variety and different incidental reading materials which can be accessed by children on they own; an environment in which a teacher cooperates freely with pupils (shows love or close attachment) during the reading sessions”*.

Teacher A: In due to responding to hindrances that bring about reading problems; **Teacher A** said that, *“ children to day are having reading difficulties which are due to many causes like:- lack of motivation due to poor reading backgrounds right from home and sometimes at schools where a pupil is first exposed; illiteracy of their parents whereby they cannot provide any assistance that can prepare a young child for future reading and inadequate time to reading programs that can enhance the development of reading skills”*.

Teacher B: She indicated that reading problems mainly emerge from:- *“ home backgrounds which are poor; poor teaching methods ; use of languages that are not at the level of the learners; lack of motivation by teachers, which result into less interest thus poor teacher – pupil relationship; abstract teaching by reading teachers and time scheduled to teach reading is inadequate”*.

Teacher C pointed out that most children are having reading problems because of *“ poor home background; poor methods used in teaching reading; time stipulated for teaching reading lessons being less; lack of proper instructional materials and lastly the issue of multilingual of our country is another hindrance”*.

Teacher D in trying to answer the question that wanted her to tell why children are having reading difficulties today, narrated like this, *“ most of the difficulties originate from, poor home backgrounds especially in rural settings, poor methods used in teaching reading and lack of proper instructional materials to use in teaching processes”*.

Teacher E said that “ *many children today are having reading due to poor home backgrounds that do not encourage the development of reading skills meaning that they lack motivation, even poor school backgrounds like lack of adequate and relevant reading materials that young children are exposed to contribute a lot to their failure in learning to read properly*”

Teachers’ suggestions

Teacher A revealed different ways on how the teaching of reading to school beginners can be promoted or improved in schools. First of all she said that in order to help children gain necessary reading skills, they should be accessed to a variety of reading materials (incidental reading materials). She further elaborated that pupils should be grouped where by the weak ones join the best readers thus learning from their peers (peer teaching), giving remedial teaching after lessons to the weak readers and that she ensures maximum teaching of reading so as to enhance reading skills in pupils.

On the other hand, her feeling is that if new policies like; reduction on teacher – pupil ratio, increasing the time for reading subjects and availing teachers with relevant and variety of reading textbooks for pupils and guide books for teachers like other subjects, reading problems can be reduced somehow. In addition to this, she emphasized the issue of giving adequate time at least an hour to each reading lesson and lastly that the concerned personnel should be advised to always create room for supervision and follow –ups to schools in order to assess how reading programs are handled in schools.

In trying to respond to coping strategies in due to improve or promote reading programs for school beginners, **Teacher B** responded like this: - “*in order to improve reading in her class I provide lots of incidental reading materials inform of pictures, charts, flash cards, reading trees, jigsaws and labels in all areas that are within the children’s reach; and I also provide play games, puzzles matching picture exercises as one way to improve reading*”.

In addition to the above, she says that having spacious classrooms and if the government could train special reading teachers, involving stakeholders like parents and infant teachers in all programs when developing the curriculum and expertise be involved in setting of reading examinations. In her last remarks, she asserted that, *“encouraging integration whereby teachers can teach reading in all subjects that is encouraging team teaching and reading not to be left to only reading teachers, advising the responsible personnel to make follow – ups to schools in order to find out the implementation of the curriculum in place and produce reading coarse books in mother tongue that are Africanized”*.

Teacher C elaborated that in prior to help children gain necessary reading skills when they begin schools; she tries *“to use relevant teaching materials when teaching; uses lots of repletion in the daily reading activities done by children and further went on to say that, giving adequate time to reading subjects and writing in lower classes and if the government can allow primary one classes to accommodate pupils of young ages (6 – 7); the curriculum be revised to suit the needs of beginning readers and to make it more focused and specific; reducing on the teacher – pupil ratio and increasing the number of teachers ”*.

When asked about the help that is given to children in order to gain necessary reading skills when they begin school, **Teacher D** first highlighted like this, *“ I use a lot of incidental reading materials, and I feel if teachers can do a lot of repetition it could be helpful”*. And commenting on new policies that she feels should be improve to advance reading programs, she narrated like this; *“giving more time to reading subjects and illustrating clearly specific content to teach in the curriculum”*. Lastly, she said that she would like to be taught other reading methods and be availed instructional materials in order to improve reading skills in beginning readers.

Teacher E responding on areas that can improve reading skill development, responded like this, *“ utilizing the local environment to get the instructional materials so as to enhance the teaching of reading, ... grouping children and allowing them to work together with their peer, and I feel the issue of teacher – pupil ratio should*

revisited". She further narrated that, in order to improve reading programs of school beginners, additional man power in lower classes is a crucial issue too and lastly if the education officials can make follow –ups and advise or give the required assistance on issues of promoting reading skills

when asked to comment on the current primary curriculum in relation to reading subjects, **Teacher A** revealed that it does not cater for reading programs for school beginners since is designed to suit only those that have acquired some skills of reading(elementary basics).

In trying to respond to the same issue, **Teacher B** pointed out that, "*the current primary curriculum is not specific; its content is hard and therefore does not provide anything suitable to school beginners*".

Teacher C's responses toward the current primary curriculum in relation to reading subjects were; "*it is not fit for school beginners because there are no guiding text books for teachers, not specific and does not show exactly what beginning readers should be taught in terms of reading skills development*".

In all the teachers attempt to answer the question that needed their comments on the current primary curriculum in relation to reading subjects, they lamented that the curriculum does not emphasize reading skills because it does not provide any reading relevant materials and the content given only develops the confidence of children via the development of social skills; and no guide books for teachers that are designed for developing reading skills especially in school beginners.

4.3 Observations

This was conducted in a typical classroom setting. It was not much detailed since it was only aiming at gaining some validity (truth) on what was indicated in the interviews. Here I was particularly interested in observing the teacher – pupil interaction for the purposes of learning reading, so through observing whether the methods used were appropriate and relevant and if teachers were competent in using

them; the content given to learners was it suiting their level. I also observed children's participation in the reading sessions through the activities given, their participation and watching whether the language of instruction was being understood by pupils.

This seemed to be inadequate so I had to also observe the instructional materials suitability and the general reading environment by observing the classroom's nature 'conducive, sitting arrangement, whether it was motivating to encourage and promote the reading skills in pupils. To achieve this I designed an observation guide to give the details of the areas I was to observe.

In all this guide identifies three major items to be critically observed in a teaching – learning situation that is; Physical environment, learning environment and social environment and their sub – items are as described previously and further information will be shown properly in (Appendix 3). This observation was carried out in the four schools respectively and their results indicated as follows.

School A: Urban Setting

The Physical Environment

This school is a government aided school located in the centre of the city, some how in a quite environment. Observations were carried out in Primary One where a group of twenty pupils were observed in a reading lesson with teachers consent. On my arrival the reading teachers were aware of my presence and my being there did not drive the children's attention because I had visited the class previously, so they knew me as their new teacher who is to come soon. I greeted the pupils and sat in class with my observation guide which did not need a lot of writing since it just wanted me to observe the incidence and give a tick on (Yes or No). The class was very attentive and the group of children was seated in one column as organized by the teacher for my observation purposes. The general environment was spacious enough to enable movement of pupils, with enough seats (desks and benches) three pupils per seat. It was a class of 70 pupils, that day but general enrolment was of 90 pupils. Windows and door shutters were in place, a large chalkboard where a teacher could write all her

work and above all enough charts with pictures, letters and words; reading trees and shopping interest corner were available. Generally, I observed the whole school environment was kind of promising in terms of its infrastructures with diagrams, illustrations and pictures on its walls.

Learning Environment

The teachers actually tried to use some of the methods they indicated during the interview sessions which seemed appropriate and relevant in the lessons observed, however, there more of talking and use of illustrations, I thought may be it was because of less time which could not allow much of pupil's participation. The teacher gave chance to group of twenty pupils whom I was specifically observing to participate and they responses were quite well, they managed to write and spell some words asked. The teachers used enough of reading materials like charts, reading cards and some illustrations on the chalkboard that were relevant for those lessons. Generally the teaching /learning of the two teachers in school A was quite promising in as far as the development of reading skills are concerned.

Social Environment

The relationship between the two teachers with their learners looked warm enough to support and encourage the learning processes. The activities given to pupils during the lessons were in the language children could understand; materials used were quite motivating, although they were not enough for all learners. The methods used by the teachers in handling their learners created a social, friendly and motivating environment because all children were actively involved in the lessons.

School B: Urban setting

Physical Environment

This school is also a government aided school situated in the city. The schools general enrolment is large almost one thousand pupils in the whole school but only 120 contribute to the enrolment of primary one pupil. Generally the schools infrastructures are in good condition with its classrooms shutters for both windows

and doors. The school walls are well designed with pictures, maps and illustrations of different kinds but educative. On my arrival to the primary one class, it seemed the teacher had prepared herself well for my observation since she knew I was coming, so her lesson was actually well prepared with all relevant and motivating materials that made the lesson charming whereby all pupils' participation was promising. She taught her lesson which was a vernacular reading lesson where she had placed the 20 pupils in one position for my observation since I could not observe all 120 pupils and capture their responses properly.

The class was arranged according to rows and columns, whereby all pupils had seats and enough space for free movement. Two chalkboards were in class because the teacher had two groups of children so the activities were different depending on their competences although the explanations could not differ much; enough reading materials like; picture and reading letter charts, flash cards, reading trees, play centre were seen.

Learning Environment

With that big population of pupils, still all pupils had sits, neatly placed in rows and smart attentive for learning. The teacher conducted mother tongue lesson which was at the level of children by explaining in both Luganda (local language) and English to enable all learners grasp the meanings properly, because not all children could follow the local language properly since it is an urban school where the problem of multilingualism is high. The teacher utilized all relevant instructional materials charts, reading cards with the support of chalkboard illustrations. The teaching to me seemed harder because of two groups of pupils whose understanding vary.

Regardless of all obstacles, still the learning process was quite good since children tried to follow the languages used, methods that made them involved in the lesson and this made it a success.

Social Environment

Children's involvement, participation in the lesson was good all indicated the great cooperation that teacher created in her teaching that created a social learning atmosphere. The teacher showed concern/love to all children in her class which was observed in the freedom children had in exchanging their views by answering questions the teacher asked them. Children's participation in the activities given in groups revealed this socialism.

School C: Rural Setting

The Physical Environment

The school is situated in one of the rural areas in the western region in a distance of 240 kilometers from the city. From the district head quarters it lies within a distance of 4 kilometers near one feeder road. It has three blocks of classrooms, two permanent and one semi – permanent. The semi – permanent occupies the pre – class, one block of two classes of primary one and two respectively and the rest of the classes occupy the large block. In the centre are some flowers and aside two staff quarters. The classes have no shutters especially of primary one and two, and in primary one are few desks that can not accommodate all pupils so some pupils have to sit on the floor which is cemented. A chalkboard which is not large enough is seen however it can not be sufficient for all pupils work because there are two groups of pupils as they call them Group **A** and **B**, the A's being those who have mastered most of the reading skills and the B's yet to do so. The class is general to large for one teacher to control 90 pupils of different levels in all subjects. The class had nothing in place in terms of instructional materials like charts and the teacher argument was that whenever they are put the wind blows them off and secondly parents don't allow teachers to spoil the walls by pinning the charts using nails. The teachers teaching involved a lot of talking and only chalkboard illustrations in other words teaching from abstract.

Learning Environment

I got the opportunity to observe two lessons of both reading vernacular and English. Actually most children seemed not to be following the lessons because the majority of children's participation was less. Only the bright pupils were paid attention to, the teacher was always rushing with time as indicated on the timetable to cover all lessons as stipulated per day, and the 30 minutes indicated for reading for each reading lesson seemed inadequate. I observed that because of teacher having two groups of pupils yet she had to teach the same lesson, using the same time as indicated really was very difficult to cope with. It was obvious that only bright children could benefit from her teaching since the classroom environment did not access anything tangible in which children could benefit from as they move around during their free time, plus her methods of teaching which not learner friendly (child centred) was.

Social Environment

The teacher-learner interaction was less since most of the pupils were not involved in the activities that the teacher gave. I observed that there was lack of proper methods of treating pupils such that the weak learners can benefit from their peers for example; group work (which could encourage peer cooperation) was missing. Generally, learners were not motivated to the teaching learning process since there was nothing in place that could promote the motivation. Somehow the language used tried to bring the teacher and children closer because she was mostly mother tongue in teaching even English so as to capture the understanding of children and grasp whatever she intended to explain.

School D: Rural Setting

Physical Environment

This school is located in the same district with **school C** but far deep in the rural. It has one permanent building where primary one has its class, with some few illustrations seen on its walls. The class has some few benches where pupils sit in a

congested manner; the class enrolment is 85 pupils. On the observation day, the class teacher was aware and had told the pupils that they had a visitor; I did not interrupt the attention of children. During the observation the class was calm thus giving me chance to make thorough observations when the teacher was teaching. She had like two charts in her class, chalkboard as her instructional materials and her major method of teaching was chalk and talk that made children's participation less active.

Learning Environment

The teacher taught a mother tongue lesson in which she used the area language (Runyankole) and all children seemed to have been following the language. However, the teacher had no instructional materials apart from the chalk and board. So children were watching her and repeating whatever they were asked to answer. Learners were less occupied because the teacher was not attending to individual needs only those who had grasped some grips of reading were attended. Given some activity to write some children had no books and pencils thus remaining seated in class, I asked her how she helps such children her response was that less attention is given since their parents can afford to send them to school for a couple of weeks without books. (What can she do as a teacher on top of the heavy load she is carrying of teaching such a large class plus all subjects alone?).

Social Environment

The relationship between the teacher and her learners was fair because few pupils followed her teaching that did not give children time to participate neither had enough instructional materials to support them. I found out that the moral of pupils was less since the content was not appropriate, no relevant and motivating methods used, the entire general atmosphere looked boring due to lack of mechanic teaching know how.

5. Discussion of findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the cross-Case-Band discussion of the research findings, final remarks and suggestions for improvements while knowing that school beginners require essential opportunities for acquiring fundamental reading skills when they enter schools. My key focus in this thesis is how reading programs are promoted in particular throughout their early years so as to boost reading skills development in school beginners. The regular teacher is seen as a chief learning facilitator in an ordinary classroom answerable in encouraging the development of these skills.

The study is guided by the following research questions which are based on these aspects.

- What language of instruction is used in teaching reading?
- Which instructional methods do teachers use in teaching reading to beginning readers?
- Is the reading environment conducive enough for learning to read?
- What are teacher's suggestions as regards the teaching /learning of reading to school beginners?

5.1 Language of Instruction

As indicated in chapter 4, the impression of findings in all Case-Bands collective shows that at least two languages were used in the teaching /learning of reading which are both English and Mother Tongue.

Urban setting

Findings from urban setting exposed responses that were less similar from all the three teachers that were concerned, they alleged in (4.2.2) that they use of English language mainly since they have diverse pupils that come from homes where numerous languages are used being an urban school, although to some degree they make translations to Luganda being the locale language in which pupils live plus being considered by the curriculum as the area language particularly when it comes to the teaching of Mother Tongue or Vernacular Subjects.

However, throughout my visitations to the schools and observations carried out during the reading lessons, I observed that the frequent language used was English which nearly all the pupils could follow accurately. The vernacular lessons observed to me indicated that the majority children were not following the language as to some point teachers were obliged to interpret various words to English for children to comprehend the meanings, hence this indicated that the language of instruction (LOI) in urban schools is a huge obstacle as regards to the teaching of reading to school beginners.

Screening the language policy in Uganda as shown in chapter 2, 2.3, The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 1990&1999), posed that children at primary level ought to learn in two languages Mother tongue and English, whereby the mother tongue is to be taught and used for instruction from Primary one and four, and English merely be taught as a subject. This may possibly not effect in urban areas where people use different languages, so it had to alter in urban areas the intermediate language of instruction had to be English throughout the Primary cycle and that the relevant area language has to be taught as a subject in Primary schools.

Despite of all these trials, to me it seems that the dilemma would now be children whose homes do not use English as a medium of communication will be more underprivileged because their endeavors to learn will be hindered by lack of reinforcement in home where semi-literate adults feel that using the mother tongue is a major means of asserting their identity.

From my experience as a teacher in urban schools, I truly feel shy to support the issue of Language of Instruction to be wholly English since I know that not all children understand English because it is not their immediate language of use, even though a few homes use it but still in several homes in cities parents use their mother tongues which are rather different from the area language because of the multi-lingual system of Uganda. To me, the matter of language will continue to be a tricky issue and extra troubles are hitherto be encountered in the area of reading due to language puzzlement faced by these young children. In support to this, Obanya,(1980) in Brock-Utne (1999), as indicated in chapter two of this study found out that ‘the African child’s major problem is Linguistic’, where the instruction is given in a language that is not normally used in his immediate environment. For the case of Ugandan urban areas, a child uses a language at home which is different from the neighborhoods and totally different from the school language.

For this matter therefore, Ugandan children born in urban settings may develop less reading skills since some do not have a whole mother tongue and second language, they are constantly in confusion of languages (to this case English and mother tongue) used by parents. Even when they enter school a distant language (English for this case) is used as a language of instruction for reading. This is supplemented by Metrotra as cited in Brock-Utne (1999), who elaborated that students who first of all learn to read in their mother tongue may later on learn to read in second language more quickly than those who are first taught to read in the second language from the beginning of their schooling. Burns et al, (1999), alleged that young children need to be exposed to high-quality language and literacy environments in their homes, day-care centre and pre-schools.

Basing on Burns proposal, my query here is which is high-quality language and literacy environments that children in urban areas exposed to for the case of Uganda? In some homes the wife speaks a different language from her husband which makes them end up using English to some extent, whereas in day-care and pre-schools English is a medium of communication and back home numerous languages are used in the neighborhoods. From this perspective one can imagine the dilemma of which

Language of Instruction could really be suitable to school beginners in urban areas. Truly, the languages of instruction in Uganda will for a lengthy of time stay ambiguous, thus causing various controversial issues in as far as which language policy should be followed for the case of Ugandan schools.

Rural Setting

On the contrary, **Teacher D** indicated that mother tongue is taught in local language where as English reading is taught in both English and mother tongue to enable learners capture the hard English concepts. And **Teacher E** also showed that both languages English and local language are used in teaching both reading languages.

These were their responses during the interview session, which to me were quite interesting. In rural schools unlike the urban schools children have a familiar mother tongue which is used both in their homes and schools and it is understood by everybody, a part from only English which seemed as only a foreign language.

I observed that the language of instruction used when teaching mother tongue by both teachers was implicit and followed by all children in spite of their abilities and capabilities since teachers used their home languages but I was astonished when it came to learning English reading which teachers are expected to teach in English all through, it too looked parallel like in urban schools where teachers had to teach mother tongue by giving some explanations in English although the difference was that not all children in urban schools could understand English competently because of diverse home backgrounds. In other words, teachers in rural schools had to formulate translation as they teach English in order to make the lesson a success.

I noticed that the question of language policy in teaching mother tongue from primary One to Four could be most excellent in rural schools since there is a common language used mutually in home and school environments. For that reason, the recent policy of the 'Thematic curriculum' on reading where the stress is on teaching using the mother tongue, to me will be successful in rural schools. But the problem will only arise when it comes to English as a subject where teachers have to clarify in

vernacular as they teach because English is not used in children's homes since parents do not regard the use of English as fundamental because they all appreciate a familiar language.

I think that still the language of instruction issue will persist to be a grave barrier as rural children's performance will be negatively affected due to the use of English, I do not think children can master a foreign language in just three years to the extent that they have to endeavor doing written examinations in which the same language will have been used. Chomsky's theory as elaborated in chapter 2, 2.1.2, refers to language development as it is in human development to be heavily determined by the nature of the environment, and that it can be severely limited unless the environment is appropriate. Connecting this to the Ugandan state of language development in our schools, I believe that our environments are inappropriate because they are not intended to raising some language skills.

5.2 Methodology

The theories that support this study have different suggestions or ideas in relation to the teaching methods that can govern teaching children in one way or the other.

Urban setting

Teacher A indicated that methods used in teaching reading to school beginners ought to be provoking ones that can engage complete participation of pupils thus encouraging skill development. She further derived an array of methods that she uses in teaching reading such as; demonstration, storytelling, chalk and talk, illustration, dramatization, peer grouping and look and say. **Teacher B** who shared the class with **Teacher A** one for English reading and another for Mother tongue reading, in her view towards methods used in teaching reading argued like this, the methods must involve learner's participation or be more child-centred and the best methods are look and say, phonic, story telling, in which she had several other methods that she uses like; role play, rote method, demonstration, discussion and group work. She further

viewed like this, *“it becomes easy when you teach reading using the ‘Phonic method’ (sound) form instead of using letter or alphabet method”*

Similarly her view is supported by Torgesen,(2004) who indicated that phonic instruction is the best approach in teaching reading to beginners by showing different ways on how phonic instruction can facilitate the development of reading skills (See chapter 2, (2.4).

The third teacher in the similar setting **Teacher C** also revealed methods like listen and say, imitation, rote method, role play as some of the methods to use and further depicted that all these methods must involve learners participation to successful.

In my opinion, I think the responses from these teachers expose better methods which can facilitate the development of reading skills if used efficiently. Teacher’s responses showed some correspondences with theories that support the study, for example; similar to the theory of ‘Situated Learning’, the indicated methods if used properly can equip children with problem-solving skills in which children can be assisted to succeed in all their educational programs for future or sustainable development

Likewise the theory of ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ which Vygotsky described as the difference between the actual development as determined by individual problem-solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more knowledgeable peers, is also a very important theory since it rectifies the role of adult in the scaffolding process of children. This notifies us that in the struggle to educate children, teachers must employ advanced methods that can progress development or which methods can unfold children’s inner abilities thus preparing them to learn.

The theory further enables teachers to appreciate the central concepts which teachers can employ as to direct children’s development, enables them to be acquainted with what a child is able to achieve through the use of a mediator (who is a teacher for this case).

Vygotsky added that play leads to development; through play and imagination a child's conceptual abilities are stretched. To me play can be regarded or used as a teaching method that can improve the growth of reading skills since through play children are involved in numerous activities which are accompanied with the use of language and in which peers of unlike ages are involved. So children can increase language skills which afterward aid them in advancing in their reading abilities. For more information on teaching strategies that are best for school beginners, (see chapter 2.4.5).

The overall consequences of the findings from schools (**A, B, C & D**) are inclined on some significant efforts observed during the interview sessions since all teachers from the four schools at least indicated diverse methods that they use in teaching reading to their children.

Rural setting

The methods used by teachers in teaching reading looked more alike as those indicated in school urban setting. The study revealed that methods which involve pupil's participation or full involvement of pupils in reading activities could yield much profit in terms of reading skill development. Theories tended to tip out the need to engage learners in learning situations in order to improve /enlarge their cognitive development (see chapter 2).

In my judgment, what is important is to utilize the methods indicated suitably, which really I did not see its occurrence quite well as teachers tended to exercise more of talking (talk and chalk method) instead of all other good methods as they indicated. Teachers views showed hold the truth on full participation in reading activities, I did not see it happening as I expected however, teachers argument was the issue of large classes, teaching in isolation, and time being less (30 minutes) per reading lesson. I support their argument because genuinely however much strong and effective a teacher can be, it is impossible to accomplish all the requirements in 30 minutes, plus the large class and being unaided to handle all subjects in the class.

In short, findings reveal that Ugandan teachers are using more abstract teaching in the struggle to train reading skills to school beginners. The majority are doing it out of ignorance because they never acquired any training in teaching reading as a subject; due to the nature of the curriculum which does not permit ample time for teachers to create reading materials and teaching; the isolation of teachers (one teacher per class) and the nature of the large enrolments with the introduction of Universal Primary Education, finally the time stipulated for teaching (30 minutes) seem to be less to enable teachers utilize it completely in equipping learners with the reasonable skills. I once more found out that teachers mainly in rural areas are not given enough support from the in charge officers like district inspectors of schools, district education officers and curriculum developers.

5.3 Learning environments

Findings from both rural and urban settings reveal the following on the learning environments that can support reading in school beginners;

Teacher's A,B & C's all from urban setting revealed that both home and school environments must be favorable and inspiring with access to variety of incidental reading materials like; pictures, play materials, letter books, charts, flash cards, reading trees labels in all areas within the child's reach and children be enabled time to practice reading with the guidance of the responsible person.

Likewise, **Teacher E** from the rural setting also asserts that *"the best environments for the development of reading skills are those that have a variety and different incidental reading materials which can be accessed by children on their own; and those in which a teacher can cooperate freely with pupils (showing love or close attachment) during the reading sessions"*.

The literature that supports the study also contributes much on the influence of the environment in the development of reading skills. For example; Lerner (1993) asserts that learning competencies depend on positive interaction with the various

environments which include both school and home environments. It is however proved that environmental factors both at home and school have contributed a lot to the Ugandan circumstances of poor reading backgrounds. That is to say due to many parents of children in local school having imperfect literacy skills and essential resources. The practice of reading to children and buying the crucial reading materials for them is not treasured. This has consequently led to children lagging behind in their reading developments (National Research Council, 1991).

Leaving that aside, school factors especially now days with the existing free education policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE), has to some extent underprivileged beginning readers. Although it has catered for the children from needy homes, it has also put stress and strain on the authorities to offer suitable learning environments for a large number of pupils. Many schools can not afford purchasing plenty of reading materials for all the pupils and National curriculum development centre in its efforts to hold reading programs has not yet provided to schools all the required and relevant instructional reading resources.

Further more, teacher's from both settings revealed also that poor environments can create reading difficulties to school beginners, and responded like this:-

Teacher A in chapter 4, viewed like this, *“children today are having reading difficulties which are due to many causes like; lack of motivation due to poor reading backgrounds right from homes and sometimes at schools where pupils are exposed first; illiteracy of their parents whereby they can not provide any assistance that can prepare young children for future reading and inadequate time to reading programs in order to enhance the development of reading skills”*

On the same issue, **Teachers B, C, D and E** views were more similar they all cited that home poor backgrounds and time being less and revealed more issues like; poor teaching methods, use of languages that are not at the level of the children, poor teacher-pupil relationships due to low motivation; abstract teaching and lack of proper instructional materials as major hindrances to reading programs.

Responses from both urban and rural setting were uniformly, meaning that both environments are faced by the same challenges. In addition to this, through the observations made, I found out that anything teachers indicated during interview sessions was actually true. The environments are not suitable or effective enough to develop reading skills, for example: - few classrooms had abundance and applicable instructional materials, the methods many teachers were using were not appropriate and appropriate in harmony with the context of what was being taught although they indicated evidently the best methods in teaching reading as elaborated in chapter 4, (4.2.3).

This therefore enables us to know that children require exposure to environments that can allow them imitate for additional development. Young children in any case require exposure to variety of reading materials, there is need for adults' assistance /guidance as they explore and learn in order to acquire the necessary reading skills. In my opinion, I feel that only teachers should be accountable for this as the case of Ugandan schools, where I observed that some parents do not know much towards the education of their children thus giving all the load to teachers to the extent that even some parents fail to provide a paper and pencil as children move to schools and wait for the teachers to empower their children with all the essential skills. It is my feeling that homes should provide the first reading environments (lay a foundation) for reading before children enter schools.

5.4 Teachers' suggestions

This section elaborates findings based on teacher's suggestions in connection to the improvement of reading programs in order to benefit beginning readers.

Teachers from both settings (**urban and rural**) had in common as they suggestions to the areas of improvement to support reading development. They all suggested the issue of the curriculum and reading resources as some of the strategies that must be targeted in order to promote reading programs. For instance, all teachers forwarded the issue of use of instructional or incidental reading materials to be accessed to

children, the curriculum to be redesigned to outfit the requirements of learners like; intensify of time from 30 minutes to at least an hour per reading lesson; teacher-pupil ratio to be reduced and specifying visibly the content to be taught to school beginners.

From my own experience, I feel that in order to uplift the standards of reading programmes in schools, a lot have to be considered. For instance; to begin with the languages used in teaching reading must suit the exact languages children use in homes, the methods used must be motivating enough to enable children's ability to participate freely. Further more, the reading content, instructional materials used must be designed to the children's level (in other words the curriculum must be made meaningful) to address the needs of school beginners.

This therefore brings us to the concluding chapter which is chapter six of this study which will give a summary of all views as highlighted in other chapters and provide possible suggestions and recommendations that can promote the teaching and learning of reading subjects to school beginners

6. Summary, Conclusion and Suggestions for Improvement

Summary

The present study investigated reading programmes in primary one in Uganda; with the following focus: **What provisions are put in place to address the teaching and learning of reading in primary one?** The study was carried out in the two districts of Kampala and Ntungamo, Uganda with five reading teachers of grade one and eighty children, all from the four selected regular primary schools.

In chapter 2 the theoretical framework, related literature and theories that support the study were linked to the themes drawn from the research questions. This included the importance of reading, language of instruction, methods/approaches used in teaching reading and reading environments were all handled logically.

The main method of investigating the problem has been a qualitative, while the main strategy was a case study (see chapter 3, 3.1). This included interviews and observations as the methods of data collection using semi-structured interview and observation guides.

Results and analysis were given and presented in chapter 4. Main findings were: ***Language of instruction:*** Teachers used two languages in teaching reading to school beginners (Mother Tongue and English)

Methodology: Teachers used a variety of reading methods but the major ones were; talk and chalk, phonic, story telling, illustration and look and say. They used the same methods for both English reading and mother tongue.

Learning environments: Teachers indicated that both home and school environments should be favorable and inspiring (motivating) with variety of incidental reading materials like; pictures, play materials, letter books and cards, charts and labels in all areas that are accessed by beginning readers.

Teachers' suggestions: All teachers almost gave similar responses as they suggested that for reading programmes to improve, the issue of the curriculum and reading resources should be targeted first. For example; enough and relevant instructional materials to be accessed to children, additional of time stipulated for teaching reading, reducing the ratio of pupil per teacher, and the curriculum content to be redesigned so as to suit the level of beginning readers.

6.1 Conclusion

The study highlighted and revealed that the teaching of reading to school beginners is done by use of two languages. All teachers showed that the teaching of reading is done in both English and mother tongue. Through interviews sessions that were conducted face to face, all teachers teach reading lessons as programmed by the curriculum but it was found out that urban teachers try to use a variety of methods; instructional materials more compared to rural teachers where those seemed to be much limited.

Findings further exposed that the majority of teachers did not have the traits of teaching reading since they never got any training in the area of reading. This therefore could have been brought about the use of inappropriate methods in teaching reading, although they indicated several methods for teaching reading during the interview sessions. Regardless of all this, the study identified some important and useful approaches or methods of teaching reading (see chapter 2, 2.4).

Teachers in urban schools had a possibility of attending some refresher courses or seminars where they attained some latest skills in teaching reading to children but in rural teachers scarcely receive such.

Through the observations, these seemed to be a modest collaboration between teachers and parents in urban schools in order to discuss areas of improvement so as to lift reading skills in children. I happen to see some parents who were invited by teachers to discuss issues pertaining to their children's educational step up strategies. Whereas in rural school teachers forwarded complaints where parents could not visit

schools and fail to provide the required learning necessities to facilitate learning like books and pencils. One teacher from rural school said “*when children sent home to bring books or pencils, parents come to abuse us so what we do is to leave the children sit in class and learn without practicing writing*”. In another school there were hardly any charts in classrooms when I asked teachers why they can not improvise at least something for children to read without only using the chalkboard, I was told that parent do not permit them to hang charts that they will spoil the walls. Discussing with the head teacher about the same issue, she narrated that whenever she invites parents to school meetings where she could discuss with them about that, they do not come.

Findings further showed that the primary curriculum does not contain proper content which teachers can employ in order to uplift reading skills development in school beginners.

Government has also pointed out its importance in helping teaching and learning outcomes (Makubuya, Jan. 2000). Nonetheless, there is also need to concentrate on the issue of reading programs in all settings of education either private or public schools since in either settings children’s reading skills need to be developed so as to lay a foundation or ladder for other educational programs.

The practicality behind undertaking this study stemmed from the issues that are being discussed in Ugandan education arrangement today in that huge numbers of pupils in primary schools are faced with reading problems. And with the introduction of universal primary education, these problems seem to have increased. Many researches have been carried out in trial to spot the causes of this and the Ministry of Education & Sports in partnership with the National Development Curriculum Centre have tried to set strategies in order to eliminate these problems but all in vain. This means that the source is not yet identified. Due to this, I was further expectant to embark on this study from the insights as generated by other personalities like

- McNamara & Moreton (1995), who stressed the importance of reading in classroom situations, they believed that learning to read is vital since up 90% if academic work involves reading.
- Rogers (1969) who upheld the use of appropriate classroom management strategies in providing learning opportunities for children in classroom settings. He asserted that a teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning, a provider of resources for learning and some one who shares feelings as well as knowledge with his or her pupils.
- Burnham & Jones (2000) and Chall, (1996) tended to identify the stages of reading skill development and suggest that educators need to help children progress along those sequences of development. Chall found out that t reading skills needs to be mastered systematically from one stage to another and they begin to develop during the first months and years of life.

These factors were what provoked my endeavor to investigate deeper on how school beginners are introduced to reading as they begin school.

6.2 Suggestions for Improvements/Recommendations

It is evident from this study that the findings on the teaching of reading to school beginners in Uganda primary schools tend to picture some areas of weakness needing improvement. These improvements nonetheless may need short or long term consideration. It may be unfeasible to give the outline of all areas that need progress but at least it offers an opportunity to some.

Suggestions to the Ministry of Education and Sports

- The ministry of education and sports should invent a feasible language policy and put it into operation.
- A nation wide proposal on the implications of teaching in Mother tongue from P-1 to P-4 levels would be a starting point as witnessed for the broad strategy of language of instruction (LOI) implementation and switch to English. This

means all the resources and implications related to teaching, and learning materials, teacher capacity and competence building and physical inputs, need to be carefully worked out.

- I think when it comes to the central examination setting, the setting should vary depending on the context of the area (rural and urban settings) because basing on the new language policy where in rural children have to learn all subjects in mother tongue and switch to English in primary five, it will be unfair to sit for the same examination with the urban children whose education has been conducted in English right from the beginning of their school life.
- I viewed teacher's involvement as a summit in the training of reading skills. Teachers have to be equipped and comprehend accurately how to finger out the area of reading as regards to school beginners. In my view, I feel that all ordinary teachers ought to be particularly offered short courses or trained skills so as to gain suitable teaching methods for reading that can facilitate them train beginning readers. This could be prearranged at sub-counties or at school and it could take place every holiday time for a period of at least one week or during school time weekends.
- Teachers should be provided with appropriate reading materials for children so that they can access curricular with simplicity, such as letter reading, picture charts and teachers resource books that are curriculum based for school beginners.
- Policy makers should organize sensitization courses to parents this can be organized at the local council level, where by they could be educated on how they can assist in providing relevant and friendly home reading environments that can promote reading skills in children; how they can collaborate with teachers and lay strategies on how to improve reading skill development of their children.
- The government through the ministry of education and sports should ensure that these who are actually affected by the policy implementation such as teachers, students and parents are effectively involved in the process of decision making.

Suggestions for curriculum developers

- Curriculum developers must recognize appropriate content material which can aid them scheme a multi-curriculum that can boost the development of reading skills in school beginners.
- Some of the policies must be revisited for instance, the issue of time and number ratio of children per teacher.
- The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) should provide sufficient and relevant instructional materials like teachers guide books to schools to make it possible teachers for recognize what they are to do.

Suggestions for head teachers' and teachers'

- Head teachers' needs to collaborate with parents by providing all the necessary guidance and counseling that can enable them understand the essence of reading to children.
- Head teachers should assist teachers in adapting or modifying the instructional materials and environments that can advance reading skills
- Head teachers should be part of the teaching team as they lay strategies to improve reading programmes in schools
- Head teachers should improvise all means of accessing reading teachers with variety of instructional materials to support the teaching process
- Teachers could at least try to teach reading through the language that is best understood by beginning readers
- They should use more time on use of verbal reading for example; story telling, rhymes and riddles, tongue twisters and other forms of verbal communication than spending much of the time on written text to beginning readers.

- Teachers try to be more creative(improvise) by use of the local environment in order to provide children with relevant reading materials
- Teachers could also try to adapt the methods they use in teaching reading to beginning readers for instance; use of discovery and methods that involve participation of learners than using chalk and talk method.

Final remarks

This study reveals much about reading programmes in Ugandan context. It has been observed that training of reading to beginning readers is affected by various factors:-

To begin with, the environments in which young children are exposed to during their early years of development in most cases are not favourable in as far as the development of reading skills is concerned.

It is further revealed that children are exposed to different languages, and in most cases the teaching of reading to beginning readers is done in the languages they do not understand.

Beginning readers need more of verbal communication skills to develop important reading skills. Unfortunately, teachers use more of written texts than verbal communication when teaching these children.

Lastly, the teaching of reading to school beginners is done through diverse approaches but the most important approaches that boost the development of reading skills promptly are not utilized. For example; use of approaches that involve children to discovery and exploration activities. The main issue is that; the content stipulated to teach reading is not good enough, the methods used are not appropriate, the languages used not relevant and the environments in which beginning readers are exposed to are not relevant and appropriate

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Stages of Reading Development

Age	Stage of development
Stage 0: from birth to 6 years	This is the pre - reading stage where the acquisition of skills is evident
Stage 1: from 6 to 7 years	This is the decoding stage when the alphabet is learnt and connection is made with the spoken words
Stage 2: 7 to 8 years	At this stage there is development in fluency and confirmation of what is already known. Chall advises that at this stage it is useful to use familiar content to allow the reader concentrate on printed words to gain fluency and speed in reading. In addition she says that the child should be 'read to more regularly to develop the language faster and that the child also needs to practice a lot of reading for confirmation, (p.20).
Stage 3: ages 8 to 14 years	At this stage the reader is reading to gain new confirmation.
Stage 4: ages 14 to 18 years	The reader works with multiple view points and more abstract ideas.
Stage 5: usually adults	This is the constructive and reconstructive stage where the reader is capable of reading selectively.

APPENDIX 2 : Interview Guide for Teachers

Introduction

Thank you very much for having accepted to participate in this exercise. I'm a student at Oslo University and carrying out my study on the reading programmes as regards to the teaching and learning of reading to school beginners. I would like to assure you that all the information you share with me will be treated with confidentiality and only used for educational purpose. Feel free to ask me questions where you do not understand. I hope you do not mind if I use a tape recorder since I need to go back and listen to our conversation.

Background

1. Age range:

Below 20 years

20-30 years

31- 40 years

41 and above years

2. Gender: Female

Male.....

3. What is your educational background in relation to young children's' education?

Teaching experience

4. How long have you been teaching reading?

5. How long have you been in this school?

6. Do you like teaching reading?

7. Which methods do you use in teaching reading?
8. What is your opinion on the methods used in teaching reading in lower classes?
(Explain).
9. Can you give me at least three approaches you think are good in teaching reading to school beginners?
10. What do you think are the reasons for most children having reading difficulties today?
11. How do you help children to gain necessary reading skills when they begin school?
12. Which languages do you use in teaching reading to school beginners?
13. Do you feel that children understand the languages used in teaching reading?
14. What do you think about the current primary curriculum in relation to reading subjects?
15. Is there any thing you would like to see changed?
16. Are there any new policies you think should be introduced in order to improve reading programs for school beginners?
17. Did you get any special training on teaching reading as a subject?
18. How do you find the teaching of reading to school beginners?
19. What is your main role as a reading teacher?

Coping strategies

20. What is your comment on teacher- learner interaction in reading sessions?
21. Can you describe how you assess your learners in reading sessions?

22. What would you want improved in your learning/teaching process for the benefit of young children in reading programs?

23. Is there any thing you would like to share with me?

24. Is there anything else you want to tell me concerning this area?

Thank you

Appendix 3: Observation Guide

Physical Environment

Location of school	Rural	Urban
Nature	Good	Fair
Classroom arrangement	Good	Fair
Lighting condition	Good	Not

Learning Environment

Approaches /methods used by the teacher in teaching reading.

Methods	Appropriateness		Teachers competence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teacher 1				
Teacher 2				
Teacher 3				
Teacher 4				
Teacher 5				

Content or matter

	Appropriateness/ level to learners	
	Ok	Not
Teacher 1		
Teacher 2		
Teacher 3		
Teacher 4		
Teacher 5		

Activities given to pupils

	Pupils participation		Level of activities	
	Active	Not	Ok	Not
Teacher 1				
Teacher 2				
Teacher 3				
Teacher 4				
Teacher 5				

Language of instruction used in teaching reading

	Language followed by learners	
	Yes	Not
Teacher 1		
Teacher 2		
Teacher 3		
Teacher 4		
Teacher 5		

Instructional materials used in teaching reading

Motivating			On the level		Suitability	
Teacher	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not
1						
Teacher 2						
Teacher 3						
Teacher 4						
Teacher5						

Social Environments
Engagement and competence

	Children level of engagement		Children competence in language used	
	Active	Not active	Ok	Not
Child 1				
Child 2				
Child 3				
Child 4				
Child 5				
Child 6				
Child 7				
Child 8				
Child 9				
Child 10				

Classroom

	Conducive		Encourages practice		Accessibility of reading materials	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Adequate	Not
Class1						
Class 2						
Class 3						
Class 4						

Appendix 4: Letter of Introduction for Head teachers

To: The Head teacher

..... Primary School

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.

My name is Rosert Kemizano. I'm a student in the University of Oslo Norway doing Masters in Special Needs Education Course. I intend to do research on the topic:

Teaching of Reading to School Beginners.

I have identified your school for the purpose of this study. I strongly feel that your participation and of your teachers' together we shall be able to discuss views and issues pertaining to the education of beginning readers and reading programmes in Uganda.

I would therefore request you to allow me carry out my study in your school, have free interaction with teachers and children at large.

I look forward to your response

Yrs Sincerely,

Rosert Kemizano.

Appendix 5: Letter of introduction from University of Oslo



**UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO**

Department of Special Needs Education

P.O.Box 1140, Blindern
N-0318 Oslo
NORWAY

Your ref:
Our ref: 13/06 BHI/db
Contact person: Denese Brittain d.a.brittain@isp.uio.no

Visiting address:
Helga Eng's Building
3rd and 4th floor

Date: June 21. 2006

Telephone: + 47 22 85 80 59
Telefax: + 47 22 85 80 21

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that **KEMIZANO, Rosert**, date of birth 01.10.1974, is a full-time student pursuing a course of study at the Department of Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway, leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education (M. Phil. SNE).

This is a continuous two-year programme run on the "sandwich" principle, which involves periods of study and field work/research in both Norway and the home country. The student has concluded the initial 11-month period in Norway and will be returning to the home country in July 2006 to continue full-time studies/research until 1 January 2007 when s/he returns to Norway for the final part of the degree. The period of study will be completed at the end of May 2007.

The main responsibility for supervising the research, developmental work and thesis remains with the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway. However, we would kindly request that the relevant authorities give the student the access required to the schools and educational establishments necessary in order to undertake field work and research. We would also be most grateful for any assistance that is afforded to the student which enables her/him to carry out this work, particularly the use of facilities such as access to telephone, fax, e-mail, computer services and libraries at the various educational establishments.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Berit Helene Johnsen (dr.scient.)
Academic Head of International Master's Programme
Department of Special Needs Education

Department of Special Needs Education
Faculty of Education
University of Oslo, Norway

Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet
Universitetet i Oslo
Norge

Appendix 6: Letter of introduction from the Ministry of Education.

Telegram: "EDUCATION"
Telephone 234451/8
Fax: 234920



Ministry of Education & Sports
Embassy House
P.O. Box 7063
Kampala, Uganda

In any correspondence on
this subject please quote No: ADM/137/310/01

20th November 2006

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to introduce to you Ms. Kemizano Rosette who is a student of Oslo University now carrying out her research study (data collection) in the study on the teaching of reading to school beginners in both urban and rural schools in Uganda.

Her study was recommended by this office and we would appreciate your support in this area.

Thank you very much for cooperating with her.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Omagor-Loican".

Martin Omagor-Loican

For: PERMANENT SECRETARY

Appendix 7: Letter of Confirmation from Ntungamo District Administration.



**Ntungamo District Local Government
Education Sector
PO Box 1
Ntungamo**

2 January 2007

RE: TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Miss Kemizano Rosert a student at Oslo university carried out an educational research for the award of Master of Philosophy in Special needs education. The topic was entitled "Assessing the teaching of reading to school beginners in the primary schools of Uganda"

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Kyahurwa'.

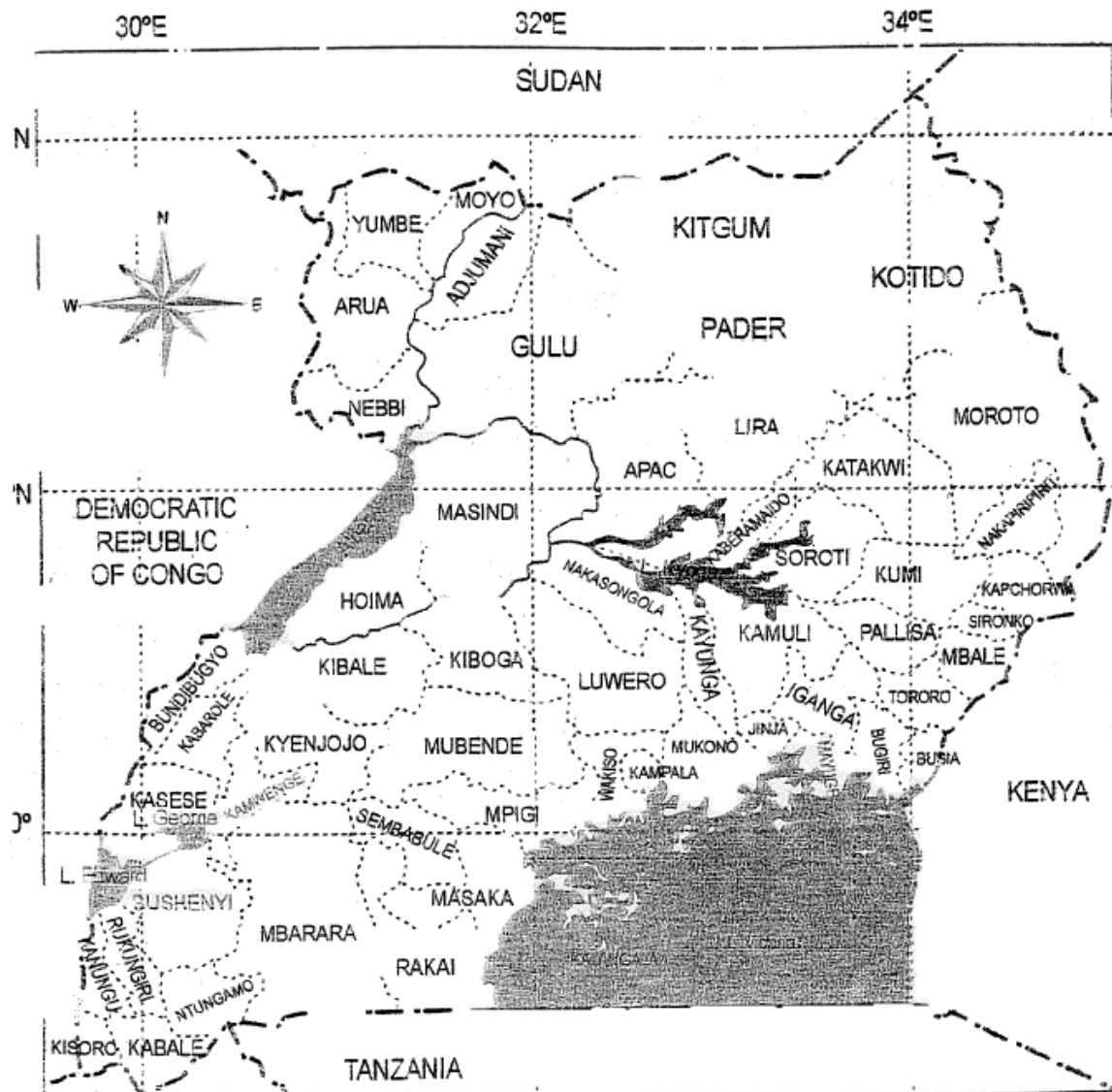
David Kyahurwa. (**Inspector of Schools**)

For: DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER - NTUNGAMO

FOR DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER

P.O. BOX 1, NTUNGAMO

Appendix 8: Map of Uganda showing the study areas.



Appendix 9: Time Frame Work

A

Oslo

January -
May (2006)

B

Uganda

June –
December
(2006)

C

Oslo

January –April
(2007)

A

Research
proposal

Literature
writing

B

Literature writing

Data collection

C

Literature writing

Data analysis and

Final thesis
production.

A indicates the first steps of the study, B second stage and C the final stages of the study.